

**TESTIMONY OF THE CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY
BEFORE THE DC HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
On the Proposed Demolition and New Construction at 513 C Street, NE
March 28, 2013**

My name is Shauna Holmes, and I'm testifying on behalf of the Capitol Hill Restoration Society's Historic Preservation Committee. As you've seen, these new rowhouses will be welcome additions to the community, and we're delighted the applicant has chosen to put homes here on Stanton Park's perimeter. These are going to be lovely homes. The flat-front, Italianate style is well suited to the historic district, as is the three-story-over-basement height, which respects the height of other rowhouses on the block. Similarly, the width of each rowhouse is commensurate with that of contributing townhouses in the historic district. We appreciate the applicant's responsiveness to our concerns regarding issues related to materials and design, and we're quite comfortable leaving the remaining design details to be worked out with staff in accordance with conditions in the staff recommendation.

The Committee agrees with staff that the existing property no longer conveys its original use or appearance, has no remaining character-defining features, and has lost enough integrity to be considered non-contributing. We therefore have no issues with its demolition to make way for the townhouses. We also have no objection to the property's subdivision, but only for purposes of this specific project.

Really, the roof decks are our only remaining concerns. While this property is beautifully located with a spacious park in front and a community garden in the rear, these very advantages become disadvantages when considering the roof decks and the likelihood of their visibility. Rooftop structures, including decks and their appurtenances, are typically required to be invisible from streets and other public space. This is a big challenge here where the houses will be visible from so many more perspectives and long angles, both in front and in the rear, than is usual in Capitol Hill neighborhoods. However, the principle of rooftop structures not being visible from public space is an important one that should not be lightly set aside. It's also very important to consider precedent, because many owners in our historic district want roof decks and will be looking to the Board to see what will be allowed.

Therefore we consider the first condition in the staff's recommendation to be critical, and we would suggest perhaps be even a bit more strongly put – that the side and rear walls and their parapets completely and fully screen the roof decks and their railings from view. This could be difficult as designed, with both parapet walls and railings 36" tall, the flat deck sitting above the roof, and the roof slanting down toward the rear – therefore 36" parapet walls that slope down will conceal less of the railings the farther back they go.

The Committee feels it would help if the side parapet walls do not slant down but stay level. The rear parapet wall probably needs to be more than 36" high to conceal the railings, since the deck will be a foot above the roof and the railing another 3' above the deck. It would also help to conceal the decks if they're pulled more like 10' back from the front of the houses, and a couple of feet in from the sides. Also, in case the railings could be glimpsed somewhere, light-colored ones would be much less visible against the sky than the black railings on other buildings in this block that clutter up

the rooflines. I want to note that the Committee greatly appreciates the architect's efforts to reduce the profile of the rooftop access structure to the extent possible, and we recommend that it too be painted a color that will make it as unobtrusive as it can be.